



TESTIMONY

Testimony to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee Public Hearing on February 8, 2023

In Support of:

HB 5441 - AN ACT CONCERNING COLLEGE GRADUATES WHO WORK IN THE FIELDS OF EDUCATION OR HEALTH CARE IN THE STATE

Good morning Senator Slap, Representative Haddad, Senator Kelly, Representative Haines, and other distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of HB 5441 - AN ACT CONCERNING COLLEGE GRADUATES WHO WORK IN THE FIELDS OF EDUCATION OR HEALTH CARE IN THE STATE.

My name is Dr. Katherine Roe and I am the Chair of Education & Educational Psychology Department at Western Connecticut State University. I am also the current President of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE-CT), a group of 13 CT public and private universities and colleges with Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs).

The AACTE-CT supports this legislation that would “establish a student loan forgiveness program or public-private partnership to encourage college graduates to pursue careers in teaching or health care in Connecticut.” AACTE-CT as an organization is keenly aware of the need to attract aspiring teachers and retain current teachers in order to address the current teacher shortage. We know full well the incredible challenges aspiring, and current teachers face, especially since having navigated the COVID pandemic and still dealing with its aftermath. While this is only a proposed bill and does not contain the specifics of a student loan forgiveness program or how a public-private partnership would work, the AACTE-CT supports the intent of this legislation to encourage and assist college graduates to become teachers.

Western Connecticut State University services the City of Danbury and many of our local candidates are first-generation college students. As you may already be aware, teachers are required to earn a Master’s level degree to in order to maintain employment in their profession. However, financial aid is not available to graduate students. Without the support of financial aid and or parental support, candidates cannot afford the high cost of a graduate education therefore apply and receive student loans. Student loan forgiveness will attract and retain talented educators and health care professionals to address this critical shortage area. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and submit comments in support of this proposed bill.

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